

Message Text

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ORIGIN AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PA-01 PRS-01 USIE-00 CIAE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 INRE-00 OCL-00 OC-05 CCO-00 PM-04 NSC-05

SP-02 SS-15 DODE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 L-03 SCS-03 SCA-01

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DRAFTED BY AF/E:RSBARRETT:SEH

APPROVED BY AF/E:WBCOOTE

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA IMMEDIATE

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: PFOR ETUS

SUBJECT:PRESS BRIEFING 9/15/75

1) THE FOLLOWING IS THE DEPARTMENT'S SPOKESMAN'S EXCHANGE
WITH REPORTERS ON SEPT. 15 ON THE ATTACK ON KAGNEW:

Q BOB, HAVE YOU GOT ANY STATEMENT REGARDING THE ERITREAN
LIBERATION FRONT DEMAND TO SHUT DOWN COMMUNICATIONS TO
SPARE THE LIVES OF THE FOUR HOSTAGE AMERICANS?

A ALL WE HAVE ON THAT, HENRY, IS WHAT WE HAVE SEEN IN THE
PRESS. WE HAVE RECEIVED NO OFFICIAL MESSAGE. I BELIEVE
ONE OF THE PRESS REPORTS I SAW SAID THAT SUCH A COMMUNI-
CATION HAD BEEN DELIVERED TO ONE OF OUR EMBASSIES IN THE
MIDDLE EAST. I CHECKED THAT JUST A FEW MINUTES BEFORE I
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CAME IN TODAY, AND WE HAVE NO RECORD OF ANY SUCH COMMUNI-

CATION BEING RECEIVED. SO IT IS OBVIOUSLY DIFFICULT FOR ME TO COMMENT ON SOMETHING THAT WE HAVE NOT OFFICIALLY BEEN INFORMED OF.

Q BOB, THE FIRST HALF OF THIS YEAR WE HAVE BEEN WRITING THAT KAGNEW WILL CLOSE DOWN, WE ARE CLOSING DOWN, WE ARE WITHDRAWING FROM KAGNEW BY JUNE, LATEST JULY. WHAT HAPPENED?

--

A I JUST DO NOT KNOW THE STATUS OF PLANS TO PHASE OUT KAGNEW. I DO KNOW THAT WE HAVE REDUCED THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE AT THOSE INSTALLATIONS TO LESS THAN FIFTY. I THINK IT IS BETWEEN FORTY AND FIFTY PEOPLE, SO IT HAS BEEN SCALED DOWN, BUT I CAN'T REALLY COMMENT ON YOUR SPECIFIC QUESTION; I'LL HAVE TO CHECK INTO WHAT THE STATUS OF THAT PLAN IS.

Q WHO IS DECIDING? THIS IS A NAVY INSTALLATION AS FAR AS I KNOW. DO THEY DECIDE?

A I WOULD ASSUME SO. IT IS A DEFENSE INSTALLATION.

Q BOB, HOW DOES IT STAND, THERE ARE FOUR AMERICANS MISSING?

A THERE WERE TWO EARLIER IN THE SUMMER, WHO WERE EMPLOYEES OF THIS COLLINS COMPANY, A CONTRACT COMPANY. NOW, OVER THE WEEKEND WE HAD TWO AMERICANS WHO ARE MILITARY PERSONNEL, ONE ARMY AND ONE NAVY. THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT, I THINK, RELEASED THEIR NAMES, PLUS SOME ETHIOPIANS WHO ARE ALSO MISSING AFTER THIS RELAY STATION WAS OVERRUN. I DO NOT HAVE ANY FURTHER INFORMATION OTHER THAN WHAT THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCED OVER THE WEEKEND.

Q YOU SAY YOU HAVE ONLY SEEN DEMANDS IN THE PRESS. IS THAT PERHAPS THE WAY THEY ARE COMMUNICATING WITH YOU, THROUGH PUBLIC DEMANDS?

A I THINK THE PRESS REPORT SAID THAT THEIR DEMANDS WERE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BEING DELIVERED TO AN EMBASSY.

Q. WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE DEMANDS IN GENERAL, WHETHER YOU RECEIVE THEM OR NOT?

A I THINK IN GENERAL THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR OBTAINING THE RELEASE OF THE AMERICANS RESTS WITH THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT. AND WE ARE IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH THE ETHIOPIAN

GOVERNMENT ON THE INCIDENT.

Q YOU WOULD DISCOURAGE THEM FROM PAYING ANY RANSOM?

A I AM NOT GOING TO COMMENT ON THE NATURE OF OUR
EXCHANGES KISSINGER

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